

Stakeholder Group Meeting Thurston County Mineral Lands Project

Tuesday, May 24th, 2018
11:00am – 1:00pm
Thurston County Courthouse Complex
HR Training Room
Building 4, First Floor, Room 101
929 Lakeridge Dr. SW, Olympia

Mineral Resource Lands Overview and Q&A

Allison Osterberg gave an overview of where we currently are in the mineral resource lands update.

- The mineral lands stakeholder meeting serves as a sounding board and to stimulate discussion and alternative areas of research. The group has met 5 times, discussing the inventory and classification update and designation of mineral resource lands. In this meeting, the stakeholder group is discussing policy and code language for mineral resource lands.
- Staff briefed the Board of County Commissioners on the Planning Commission recommendation on May 16, 2018. The board requested more information regarding options around the 1000-foot separation distance. Staff presented these options to the BoCC on May 22, 2018. The BoCC requested specific examples of how the 1000-foot separation distance could be handled in the policy level.
- The BoCC will be discussing mineral resource lands again at their planning session on May 31, 2018.
- Draft chapters are expected for release in June. Staff will begin work sessions with the Planning Commission on comprehensive plan chapters in June, and a public hearing will be held on the comprehensive plan in late summer.

Mineral Resource Lands – Chapter 3 narrative

1. Community Vision

The mineral lands stakeholder group began discussion with the community vision that is currently in Chapter 3:

The citizens of Thurston County recognize mining as an important part of the local and regional economy. Mineral resources such as sand and gravel supply materials for road maintenance and construction projects throughout western Washington. The community seeks a balance between the need for mineral resources and the need to protect the environment and the community from any adverse impacts of mining through best management practices, reclamation, and restoration. Good stewardship of mining operations takes a partnership among mining operators, county citizens, and regulatory agencies.

The following comments were made from the group:

- Recommended changing western Washington to region.
- Expressed concern over the use of the word “regional” to imply that we are exporting materials to other counties.

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- Other stakeholders noted that the same is for other resource industries, such as forestry, aquaculture, and agriculture.
- Even if the goods are exported, employment stays local.

2. Other Comments in the Narrative

The following comments were made from the group on the mineral lands narrative in Chapter 3 (background section):

- Use of the word “basalt” has a narrow definition. Remove and just refer to as shot rock.
- Bedrock resources may better be estimated as “unknown”, rather than “limitless” as currently described in the chapter.
- Third paragraph on the mining industry seems irrelevant to the overall goals and policies of the chapter; more related to economics.

Mineral Resource Lands – Chapter 3 Goals, Objectives, & Policies

1. Goals in Chapter 3

Stakeholders reviewed the updated language of the goals, objectives and policies in chapter 3 for mineral lands. Stakeholders first reviewed the overarching goals. Goal 8, which states,

“ENSURE THAT IMPACTS TO THE ENVIRONMENT AND OTHER SURROUNDING LAND USES FROM EXTRACTION ON MINERAL RESOURCE LANDS OF LONG-TERM COMMERCIAL SIGNIFICANCE ARE MITIGATED FOR AND MANAGED THROUGH THE PERMITTING PROCESS.”

Received the following comments:

- Because designation is going from a site-by-site to a blanket designation, this eliminates one step from the public process. The blanket designation may make it difficult for citizens to follow new operations.
- Look into expanding the SEPA notice for mining operations; 2 weeks is limited time for comment
 - One alternative could be to encourage mines to hold a public meeting before they make application.
- Look into creating a register of new permits that come in for mineral operations and have available to the public.
 - Does DNR have a database? Can it be filtered to Thurston County?

Additionally, Goal 9, which states,

“ENSURE THAT RECLAMATION AND RESTORATION ARE DESIGNED FOR THE APPROPRIATE POST-EXTRACTIVE USE OF THE SITE AND ARE COMPATIBLE WITH PLANNED FUTURE USE OF ADJACENT LANDS.”

Received the following comments:

- Goal is repetitive because it is already addressed by DNR through state regulations

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- Could add a reference to state regulations in the text of the goal.

2. Objectives and Policies in Chapter 3

Stakeholders reviewed the policy language in Chapter 3 for mineral resource lands.

- Stakeholders commented on Goal 7, Policy 5(a)(i), which states “Designated mineral resource lands should contain deposits consisting of sand and gravel, coal, sandstone, basalt, or other igneous rock, based...”. Stakeholders asked if by specifying we are limiting the industry to only those resources.
 - Staff responded that those are the only known commercially available minerals in the County at this time, and thus the only ones designated. If other types of minerals became available in the County, we could amend this text when the inventory and designation map are updated.
- Stakeholders commented on Goal 7, Policy 5(a)(i) and 5(a)(iii) regarding the 1,000 foot buffer and what is an appropriate middle-ground. Discussion ensued.
- Stakeholders commented on Goal 7, Policy 5(c) and that the use of the word may is ambiguous. Staff noted that not all resource lands overlap, so may is appropriate in this context.
- Stakeholders commented on Goal 7, Policy 6, which sets a minimum threshold for designation. Some stakeholders noted that conducting this through GIS data, using the data of the parcel may have different results than using the Assessor’s rounded data. This is also the case with policy 5(d)(iii) which states designated mineral lands shall not include any site that is 5 acres in size or larger if more than 40% of the surrounding parcels are less than 5 acres in size.
- Stakeholders discussed the resource use notice for designated mineral lands. One stakeholder recommended reaching out to an alternative group such as an HOA or development group.
 - The group recommended eliminating specificity from the chapter and maintaining in the code.
- Stakeholders commented on Goal 9, Policy 4, and stated that specificity should be added as to what future uses should be compatible with.

3. Code Changes

Stakeholders reviewed the proposed code changes. The following comments were made:

- Maintain the resource use notice in the code, but remove specificity from the comprehensive plan.
- Double check the use of “non-conforming” under the code.
- Clarification of language used to describe expansion of operations onto undesignated parcels. Specifically “existing site”.

Next Steps

- The Board of County Commissioners will continue their discussion on Mineral Resource Lands, scheduled for May 31, 2018.